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DESIGNATE A NON-DRINKING DRIVER DURING ST. PATRICK'S DAY WEEKEND & REPORT DRUNK DRIVERS BY CALLING CHP

(Sacramento) – This weekend marks St. Patrick's Day, with celebrations that usually involve alcohol. In an attempt to reduce the number of fatalities related to alcohol from the 1,462 recorded in 2004, California's Statewide Traffic Action Response (STAR) program will be activated this weekend by pooling the resources of five traffic safety related departments under the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH).

Throughout the weekend, California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers will increase patrol efforts around the state, Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Investigators will conduct enforcement operations to check licensed premises that sell alcohol, and regional law enforcement agencies under the Office of Traffic Safety's (OTS) "Avoid" anti-DUI task force will arrest drunk drivers. Caltrans will also flash anti-DUI messages on Changeable Message Signs lining roadways across the state and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will flash similar messages on its district office message boards.

"Don't rely on the luck of the Irish. If you are going to drink alcohol, play it safe. Plan to have a non-drinking designated driver or use public transportation to get home safely," said CHP Assistant Commissioner Kevin Green.

"At ABC, we have a huge focus on the problem of underage drinking," said ABC Director Jerry Jolly. "We will be checking licensed businesses to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors because young people are tragically dying in alcohol-related incidents." CHP statistics for 2004 show that 680 of the 1,462 people who died in alcohol-related crashes were under the age of 21.

"I'm proud to be part of this innovative partnership aimed at saving lives" said Caltrans Director Will Kempton. "We're asking for your help. If you see a drunk driver, call CHP."

OTS also wants to remind everyone that wearing a seat belt is the single most effective measure motorists and passengers can take to save lives and reduce injuries. "Two seconds is all it takes to buckle a seat belt. That could be the difference between life and death in a crash," said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. In addition to parents, other adults and guardians need to make

sure young children are in properly attached safety and booster seats and those age six and over are buckled up, as well.

“The DMV is proud to once again participate in this awareness campaign to reduce the number of alcohol related accidents and deaths,” said DMV Chief Deputy Director Ken Miyao. “We always encourage people to be safety conscious, whether as a vehicle driver or passenger.”

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